

**one in a million by stardustupinlights**

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**Summary:**

There's an old refrain that says: "You only meet your soulmate once every one million lifetimes."

This is the case for Fujiki Yusaku and Kogami Ryoken.

**Relationships:** Fujiki Yuusaku/Revolver | Kougami Ryouken

**Comments:** 21

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## 1. one

### Author's Note:

So, this is a new work I will write new installments for when I feel like it, because I just love this idea since it allows me to play a lot with the characters and setting. I'm not sure of when this is going to end, if it ever does, but you could take this as a series of semi-related one-shots, of varying length. Tags will be added as they appear, so look out for that, and the rating will probably not change, but I just want to be safe :)

Anyways, please enjoy.

There's an old refrain that says: "You only meet your soulmate once every one million lifetimes."

This, of course, means that the possibilities of finding them are abysmal—soulmates have to go through literally thousands of lifetimes before they come across each other, and even then, there's no guarantee that they'll spend that precious lifetime together, as they are not aware of their connection and could easily waste their chance without even knowing they did.

This is the case for Fujiki Yusaku and Kogami Ryoken.

The first time they find each other, the first time their eyes meet, is also the one time that starts a cycle of unspoken words and broken promises; Ryoken's father kidnaps six children to create an artificial intelligence that is to be the legacy of humankind, and things spiral down out of control from there, to everyone's despair.

We all know this story, the one of Playmaker's quest for revenge and Revolver's impossible mission, of two people whose strings were pulled so hard they might just break and an endless cycle of miscommunication and secrets, so this is not the meeting we'll be focusing on. Nevertheless, seeing as this is their first, it is necessary to know how it ends— despite this not

being a happy ending, it is an important one, as it's a perfect example of circumstance pushing apart two people who are meant to be together.

Playmaker's sacrifice, Ryoken would try to reason to himself after the fact, after watching him face down his demise with a smile and a shrug directed at him, was something he could not have stopped. Fujiki Yusaku was a headstrong individual with an unshakable will and if the price to save them all was his own life, then he would gladly pay it, especially once he realized that no card game was going to be enough to get them out of this one.

Ryoken tries to live with his choice, but he can't. *I was the one supposed to go*, he thinks to himself at night, when he can't make deaf ears to his own thoughts anymore, *I was the one who was ready for this, and you were supposed to move on, not me, I don't know how to move on—*

Ryoken lives a quiet life. He doesn't do much, not in the aftermath of Playmaker's death nor ten, twenty, thirty years after the fact, as there's nothing that he feels like he needs to do. He tries to make some wrongs right at the beginning, and succeeds on it – watching SOL go down in a much more vicious way than Playmaker did was as satisfying as anything would ever be - but after that, he just becomes a recluse, refusing to even try and have the life his father and SOL took away from Fujiki Yusaku.

He's frozen in time, it seems, always going back to the same picture, to the same wandering thoughts, to the feeling of Playmaker's chest going still in his arms as life is finally drained out of him, three words whispered in his ear always playing on the back of his mind without rest, bringing tears to his eyes and shaking limbs every time the memory resurfaces, making him want to scream.

Stardust Road stops being as beautiful as it once was the night of- the tragedy, really, he can only call it that. The glittering lights and mesmerizing view lose some of their shine, especially as the months pass him by until he stops looking out at it altogether, too much of a coward to face it and to learn to enjoy it again. He didn't care much about what Playmaker's allies were up to anymore, or the Ignis for that matter - how could he keep hunting the reason Playmaker was even *gone*, after all - and they never reach out to him again, too hurt by the lost themselves. His

funeral is a quiet, awkward affair, what with the fact that Soulburner breaks down to his knees in tears and Kusanagi Shoichi fails at his attempted efforts to bring up the mood by reminiscing about Fujiki Yusaku's day to day life. Ryoken pays for the whole thing, and they accept this without complaint, wary eyes looking him up from the corner until the second he leaves like they fear he might do something reckless.

(And he did— Ryoken takes out SOL without any help from any of them, only Spectre as his support, and he's so efficient and ruthless during it that people online wonder where this fearsome will was during the Tower of Hanoi. The answer to this question, of course, is in the fact that Playmaker was there, and now he wasn't.)

Spectre worries, but Ryoken also doesn't care about that, as he always knew he would go down fighting or live long enough to regret it— and regret it he did. Ryoken was never afraid of death in the conventional way, too hardened by the years of being his father's warrior and then by the emptiness that his life became, but when it finally comes for him and despite how he accepts it gladly, the only thing he can think of is how he never expected to go down with these particular regrets, with whispered words he never got to say back echoing in his ears even after decades.

At some point, he made Spectre plant a wisteria tree in the mansion's garden, to try and preserve the memory of his rival – *as if he would ever forget* – but as much as he grows to love the tree, caring for it as if it was a precious being, old bitterness and guilt always choke him up as he wishes he didn't have to love a sentimental symbol of his failures instead of the person who even made him plant it on the first place. One day, old age making him feel tired and beat down in a way he never really got used to, he decides to go and sit underneath it, closing his eyes. He has a dream of soft hands holding his face, a feeling of restlessness filling him for a few seconds before it just stops, and the smell of grass fills his lungs as he starts to feel airy, falling asleep easily and going eagerly into what feels like awaiting arms.

He never wakes up.

## 2. two

### Notes for the Chapter:

This one's been in my drafts for a while, and I felt like writing something, so here you go :)

Despite the pain of their first meeting and its abrupt end before anything could really start, the second time they find each other, unfortunately, nothing clicks. There's no magic moment when their eyes meet again, not swelling background music or even the feeling of *deja vu*. It is, in short, a normal encounter between two people characterized by a glare and a frown that might be reminiscent for us but new and strange, never mind upsetting, for them.

Ryoken is a business major on a prestigious university a few continents away from Den City, born with a silver spoon on his mouth and set to inherit a big fortune and a successful company from his family. All his life, he was cared for and interacted with only the highest members of society, doing extremely well at both sports and academics— he was, to put it mildly, a bit of a self-entitled asshole, and lacked the small amount of backbone his previous iteration from his first meeting with Yusaku seemed to have.

They do not use the same names every life, but this is hardly relevant. They haven't changed, but they aren't the same either, in a way.

In contrast to Ryoken, Yusaku has a beautifully average life— in this instance, there's no pain or childhood trauma, and there's no need to take revenge or to act like a martyr for others. He goes to a community college a few miles south of where Ryoken is, enjoys going out to the movies with his friends, and struggles to get a handle on what he wants his major to be, much like many people do. He has a loving home, with caring parents and an annoying big sister; overall, he's really happy, even if everyone around him pressures him to either get his shit together or get a job that doesn't involve street food or video games. By this point, he has already lived and

enjoyed his life more than the original Fujiki Yusaku did, and that is one of the silver linings of this particular tale, not that there are many.

They have nothing in common this time, no connections dictated by fate apart from the fact that they're supposed to find each other— and they do, eventually, on accident.

Ryoken is doing an internship on Yusaku's town, renting a penthouse that's much too big for only one person but that fits perfectly with what's expected of someone from his social status, and one night he finds himself craving, very fittingly, a hotdog, so he ventures out without knowing where to go exactly. That he comes across Yusaku is obviously a coincidence, a cosmic push from the universe to point them in the right direction, but the way they collide against each other and the fact that Ryoken's been raised to think everyone is beneath him doesn't fly well with Yusaku at all at the start.

What follows might just be the most disappointing example moving forward as we visit more lives, because where there was potential and a chance to finally be together after the unfairness of their previous meeting, there also wasn't enough interest nor a good first impression to go off on. They have a heated verbal argument in the middle of a crowded street, Yusaku's friends watching the whole thing, about the complications that come with hitting a person on accident while walking because they weren't looking ahead at where they were going, and who should apologize. The blame gets shifted around back and forth for about ten minutes before Yusaku gives up and flips him off, to which Ryoken stalks off and finds his way back home, a curse on his lips and a threat to sue.

Later, after enjoying his evening and laughing off the whole encounter, Yusaku would feel like he's missing something, like perhaps he forgot to make sure of something important, but in the end he would shrug it off to his habit of misplacing his keys or his phone and forget about the infuriating stranger he came across. Ryoken, contrary to this, wouldn't be able to sleep for several nights afterward and would continuously choke on confusing, unrecognizable feelings during the day, to his absolute displeasure. It's like someone is trying to tell him something, it installs a sense of panic inside him that he can't get rid of, and one night he is given

the horrifying image of a child crying in a white room and asking for help during a nightmare that jolts him awake.

The next morning, though, he would wake up fine and without a clue about what his dreams were about, moving on quickly and going about his life as usual: climbing the corporate ladder and stepping on people to get what he wanted, wearing his family name with pride, which would have probably made the previous Ryoken, who had to go through life alone as he did, cringe and frown in distaste.

They find each other a couple of times after this in this particular lifetime, but these meetings are both awkward and hostile. Once, it happens in a restaurant, and Yusaku, to the horror of his family, flips him off from across the room once he recognizes him, making Ryoken's date choke on their food and complain quite loudly, embarrassing him in front of the whole place. The second time, Ryoken almost runs him over with his car, a feat that starts up yet another fight that lasts twenty minutes, creating traffic, and ends with Ryoken taking Yusaku to the hospital and writing him up a check for the bill, as well as with both of them exchanging numbers very reluctantly at Yusaku's insistence.

Still, nothing comes of this, even as Yusaku tries to be friendly by spamming Ryoken's phone with memes as a way to say thanks for the money. They both lose interest as their lifestyles grow even further apart, and eventually, the numbers get deleted without much preamble once each of them gets a new phone.

Ryoken graduates with honors and Yusaku starts his own, small but fairly successful software development service, and they never think of each other again, apart from those times in which they want to tell a funny story and the quiet nights in which panic chases their dreams, a feeling of restlessness hitting them at seemingly random times. It's safe to say that these echoes of memories and feelings might just be a residual part of their first life together hiding in the back of their minds; that life was filled with such pain and heartbreak that their subconscious is trying to point them in the right direction, but life doesn't work like that— this is another place, another time, and almost an entirely different set of people that only kept the very essence of their being and nothing else.



Regardless, though, there's nothing else to say or do about this; things happened as they did, and all in all, that was it.

### 3. three (prelude)

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Ahhhh I'm so excited about this one! We'll see where this goes after a while. Please enjoy!

The third time, in what we can only assume is a nice callback to the three things mantra from their first life, goes surprisingly well against all odds. It really shouldn't have, but the universe clearly works in mysterious ways for these two.

In this instance, Ryoken is the Crown Prince of a deeply corrupt kingdom that has given up on a normal upbringing for the sake of becoming his land's sword and shield. By the age of nineteen, Ryoken is the leader of the army and head of the King's Guard, and he feels pretty confident over his skill, comfortable with the exertion of battle and the endless hours of training. He was perfectly taught by his tutors on the arts of war, politics, economy, etiquette, courtesy, and all things a prince should know, but he always felt more comfortable out on the fields than at home, his trainers on combat and magic extremely pleased with his willingness to improve beyond what others could do. When questioned about this, Ryoken would claim it wasn't something he could explain— he just knew he wasn't born to sit on a throne and brood like his father did even as his sickness got worse, and the growing absence of the king outside of the palace and the capital allowed him to see, as he traveled, the wrongness of his ruling, the contrast between the rich and the poor, the fear on the townspeople eyes as they accepted his gifts, making his own morals and ethics develop far beyond his father's expectations and wishes.

Even then, Ryoken couldn't just betray his father and leave it all behind—he loves his land, his loyal lieutenants, his mother who is forced to keep her head down unless she wanted to face the king's wrath, and he loves his people despite how they don't really love him by association with the king, so, he stays quiet and helps where he can, fooling his father's commands and pushing back the raids and attacks on villages until his control over

what happens on the kingdom is the last thread keeping them from a war with others, and his public image becomes so manufactured he doesn't even know where he begins as a prince and where he ends as a traitor. During the day, he's his father's pride, but at night, he plans; he plots and rearranges and works on strategies, and silently waits for his father's sickness to develop further. He loves him, but he loves everything else more, and it's time for at least one of Ryoken's incarnations to stand up to him, not that he has a way of knowing he ever didn't.

Yusaku, in this life, is a stain in Ryoken's plans to take over quietly and without rush by waiting on his father's passing he didn't see coming. Born to a couple of high-ranking nobles who got stripped of their titles, names, lands and everything that was rightfully theirs because they dared to disagree with the king's plans, only for then be chased and killed, there's a weight on his shoulders as he grows up on the streets of the capital to make things right, not only for his family's legacy, but for the people that have helped him become the leader of the rebellion he is when he first comes across Prince Ryoken in the battlefield. A mercenary, some call him, a ghost and a myth, people whisper, but he's much more than a bastard from the remnants of royalty his parents were before they were executed and the king will pretend he's not responsible for, and he's determined to prove it until his last breath; dark magic, what was once his family's expertise before it was forbidden across the whole country with their demise, was not easy to self-learn and self-train, but he made it with little to no help and has since grown into it in ways he wasn't expecting.

A rebellion brew right under Ryoken's nose without him noticing, focused on dealing with the more grave and alarming issues inside the court and within the army, so when he starts hearing the whispers during a countrywide trip of people rising against his father's ironclad laws, he gets both anxious and excited for some retribution for the things he's seen the nobles do behind the citizen's backs, the things he was raised around and what he knows he's done to countless families. Still, he's wary— a rebellion complicates things for him, so at the start, he just ignores it and lets things happen while pretending he's making an effort to snuff them out, keeping up the charade as much as he can.

The one thing that worries him the most is the leader of the whole movement— Yusaku is a ghost, always acting quietly up until he strikes where it hurts and all hell breaks loose in whatever place he is, taking down whole squads of guards Ryoken's trained with his whole life like it's no big deal, his allies just as strong and as easy to miss, massive amounts of magic flooding the place and leaving only guilty victims behind. In some towns, they call him the Grim, and others just plain Death or the King's Doom, because he always succeeds, he always gets away, and death always follows his path like a dangerous friend, never losing anything while the king has to bend over to not lose any more land to the rebels. He goes as far as to use a scythe at times, along with mastering several other weapons in such a way that it competes against Ryoken's own excruciating knowledge of them; he's deathly and the nicknames accurate, but Ryoken is not afraid simply because he knows this is *good*.

But dread hangs onto him unpleasantly as the king pressures him to get rid of the threat Yusaku poses and he struggles to come up with excuses, trying to keep his front as totally loyal to his father's reign without screwing up. It's an eerily familiar situation they find each other in this time— enemies on opposite sides but who are working towards a similar goal to achieve peace, only this time they are meant to collide together faster and harder than ever into the hands of fate, their first meeting being quite literally the sparking of a flame as the city burns around them.

It's a year into Yusaku's plans to take over that they face each other, and from an objective point of view, it is not pleasant— their battle is long, and all the while, Ryoken suffers through his own inability to keep the rebellion from losing resources and avoids his temporary companions in this particular trip from realizing he's not giving his all against what's now considered a massive threat with excellence, despite how hard it is. Yusaku, in contrast, fights with every skill at his disposal and then some, working his way through the chaos of what his plans to free one of the most important cities in the country from the king's influence became without hesitation or pause, ruthless and quick to single out Ryoken's shining armor among everything, eyes set on his goal to hit the king where it will hurt the most by getting rid of his most loyal servant—

Their eyes meet, and something clicks, electricity buzzing in the space between them that they both feel even several feet's away from each other, and it makes Ryoken smile to know that, if he wants to survive to see Yusaku's plans through, he'll have to fight for his *life*. Yusaku finds this joy strange, but he's not one to judge other people's reasons to grin when he's so satisfied at how this attack is going, victory almost in his grasp, and they find a mutual understanding as they fight, Ryoken's sword against Yusaku's dual blades infused with magic, making him a bit disappointed he's not using that famous dark magic scythe of his. Ryoken usually never uses magic on the field—he was told it was dangerous, that even his carefully crafted control could get ruined in the heat of battle because of the sheer talent and strength behind it, but he's an overachiever, and Yusaku does not hold back, does not back down, does not bend to his skill with the sword like many others have, so he has no choice.

The dark magic Yusaku uses burns Ryoken to his very core, but after he starts giving back just as bad as he's getting they are both left gasping, going at it barehanded and all but forgetting about the battlefield around them in their haste to beat the other down. Ryoken, like the good knight he is and to Yusaku's surprise, fights fair and square instead of resorting to the dirty tricks of some of his comrades, which is something he appreciates—too often, members of the royal army try to undermine his skill, claiming dark magic is death and weak and long forgotten, buried with his family, but Yusaku knows better, and it's fulfilling to have someone as strong as the prince acknowledge that he's not easy opponent and that he should not be taken lightly. Ryoken has his own reputation all over the country—so noble and handsome and kind and truthful, the perfect warrior and leader, an ideal prince for their nation, but it's the things people talk about behind closed doors that makes Yusaku feel intrigued about him, eager to face him and take him down, listening to the rumors of how he carries so much power under his skin, how he was gifted by the gods with divine-like power, of how it's his mother's blood that makes him so strong and so resilient, with a certain degree of expectation and curiosity rising inside Yusaku at every word. Every time he hears something like this, Yusaku could see the appeal of the citizens hoping Ryoken isn't like his father, but he knows better than to trust that, too familiar with the darkness that lurks inside that lush palace, with how cruel the king could be.

At the same time though, he has no idea the anonymous donations, the easy days of running away from the law, the mistakes the royal army makes and the increasing recklessness of the king are all Ryoken's doing. One year before their meeting is a long time for Ryoken to move chess pieces, and he's done so carefully, pretty aware of what Yusaku's plans might be and getting it at least half right most of the time. He's far more ahead in the game than he can even imagine, but during their first battle it's clear the Yusaku is not really a representation of Death, nor the bringer of it— he's the one that will lead them into the future, and Ryoken is eager to help, because he knows that after the dust is settled, that throne will not be his to take.

It begs the question, then: who is in the right here? Ryoken wants Yusaku to slow down behind the scenes so he can make things for him work on the court, but Yusaku believes him to be just a product of his upbringing— this is only their first clash, and it won't be their last, the morbid excitement in Ryoken's eyes and the thoughtfulness of Yusaku's expression afterwards guaranteeing this.

In fact, the last of their fights will come much, much later, and they won't be on opposite sides any longer, a new enemy rising beyond Ryoken's father grave. But that's a story for another day.

Moving on, then— their fourth life together is a mess.

## 4. four

### Notes for the Chapter:

And another one. I just realized I normally upload here when I do in another fic so uh. That's not on purpose but it may just become so. Anyways, please enjoy. We got a happy one this time! :D

As mentioned before, their fourth life together is a mess. It ends well, of course, because for once there's not much at stake— except for their own feelings.

They are extremely lucky in this life, as they happen to grow up right next to each other, neighbors from the moment they were born. Their mothers are college friends, know each other from head to toe, and for once Ryoken's dad is not a psychopathic asshole, even though he's still a normal asshole. Yusaku's dad gets along well enough with him, but he finds the distance between him and his son a bit uncomfortable to be around as tensions grow over the years, Ryoken's mom drifting away with each year that passes.

They fall in love easily, this time.

Ryoken is two years older than Yusaku, and thus the one that takes it upon himself to protect him from any evil that any nine and seven-year-old could come across. Yusaku's innocence is undisturbed this time around, and so he never loses that shine in his eye, but he's just as infatuated with Ryoken as he always is, looking up at him like he hung the moon and the stars in the sky. When they're this young though, Ryoken can't see him as anything else than a little brother, his family, his very first friend, and this creates a chasm between the two of them when high school rolls around for Ryoken.

They're still friends, best friends in fact, but by this point Yusaku is completely over his head in love with Ryoken and refusing to do anything about it, instead suffering in silence every time Ryoken goes on a date with some lucky individual and innocently vents about his relationships to him. Yusaku had not bothered to date anyone else, because he knows it would

not be genuine, but it isn't until he's sixteen and turning and growing into the delicate beauty we all know he is that Ryoken realizes Yusaku is not that little boy he used to see.

He says nothing about this newborn attraction, thinking Yusaku only sees him as family just like he did, but it only takes a well-placed joke from his mom about Yusaku getting too close to this one friend of his for him to take the risk and ask him out.

Yusaku says no.

It's a very awkward moment, and Ryoken's confidence dies within seconds at that answer. They were supposed to walk home together from school when Ryoken popped the question, but now that seemed like an impossible feat. He clenches his teeth and swallows down the shame while Yusaku internally screams, because that denial was *not* supposed to happen— he panicked and said no, momentarily blinded by the possibility that Ryoken might be pitying him, but he knows him better than that, or at least he should.

They do nothing to solve this problem for a good two months. Dinners between their families are common every weekend, but now they're stiff and oddly formal, and all of the parents in the room notice— Ryoken's dad doesn't care much, and Yusaku's dad can't really understand what's happening, but their moms are onto them and try to talk to them separately to no avail. There are very little things stronger than teenage stubbornness and embarrassment, so they make no progress and they can't do anything else but wait for things to blow over with crossed fingers.

It's not ideal when and how it does, but then again, this life is a mess and it's their own damn fault, for all pieces were already in place. They just had to follow them but when it comes to destiny they both seemed to love complicating things.

It turns out Yusaku couldn't let his little mistake in peace and he actually, for once, accepted a date from one of the several offers he got at school. *In his defense*, Yusaku thought it may be better to just forget about Ryoken, but he was not accounting for the fact that he's is a very jealous individual



when it comes to him specifically—he does not like to share Yusaku much, not even with that annoying pet of his, so when he finds out about this from someone else's mouth he can't help but be both hurt and angry, as well as disappointed. He does not chase Yusaku down, lets him have his date, but when they face each other the next day for one of their usual family dinners Ryoken can barely keep the bitterness from his voice, which eventually results in a screaming match, their dads running away to the other house and their moms listening with attention from another room, high-fiving each other when it eventually ends on both of them confessing their feelings.

Due to both of their embarrassment, Ryoken ends up being thrown out of Yusaku's house, but instead of walking away he stays on the porch all night, brooding, determined to get his shit together once Yusaku was ready to face him. And ready he was, early in the morning, when he almost stepped over Ryoken in his hassle to get out of the house and realized he was serious—Ryoken was not Romeo, he didn't throw pebbles at windows for anyone, he knew that from all the times he's heard him complain about people he's dated, so he knows this is an exception. The thought that Ryoken finds him important enough to do this warms his heart again from when he tried to get some distance from his feelings, and after a quiet talk to contrast their screaming from the night before, they agree to go on a date.

It goes perfectly.

They start dating right away, of course, because there's nothing stopping them, and they're both happier than they've ever been, both in this life and their previous ones. It's not all roses and chocolates; Ryoken eventually graduates and goes off to college while Yusaku has to finish high school, which means that for a couple of years they barely see each other save for phone calls and video chats, but it is nothing but a brief interlude in their story until Yusaku graduates and moves in with him into his two bedroom apartment with a gorgeous view of the beach. From there on, it's smooth sailing, and Ryoken proposes during a winter break, on his birthday, standing in their favorite spot in their hometown, and Yusaku says yes.

A couple of years after their beautiful, private, tearful wedding – their moms knew all along, but that didn't make it any less emotional – they

adopt three children; one of them is hyperactive and loud, one is a sweet girl with blue eyes that remind Yusaku of Ryoken, and one is quiet and smart, with a mean streak that has him butting heads with his older brother. They also get a couple of pets to add to the little dog Yusaku's had for his whole life, a fluffy fat cat and a hamster that has to be kept away from the children for a good few years, but the way the space in their apartment reduced in time forced them to move into a two-floor house, with a big backyard and a pool.

It's a happy life, and a long one too. They do too many things to keep a track of, between anniversary celebrations, births, birthdays, vacations, and unfortunately a couple of funerals – Ryoken's father would be missed, but in hindsight of that eventual divorce his parents had, not by much – so it's safe to say nothing went wrong here, despite that shaky start.

By the time both of them are in their old age, nothing has changed. Yusaku still looks up at Ryoken like he holds the stars in the sky and this time Ryoken looks back with just as much love and devotion, and Yusaku passes away about a year after Ryoken does in his sleep, safe and happy knowing he would be following his love.

There's really not much left to say about this— it is an ordinary yet fulfilling lifetime, and the first in which they aren't torn apart repetitively by external sources, but we should not linger on it, or any of the other ones for that matter, as they still have many more to come.

Next up, we rewind back for a twist.

## 5. three (part one)

### Summary for the Chapter:

[PLEASE READ THE TAGS FOR THE SENSIBLE CONTENT]

Please make sure to check the tags and warnings every time I update here! The rating changed now that I'm starting to dive into some other type content, and when more of these darker stories start to go up I'll make sure to set up a list on the fic summary for reader safety! I don't feel comfortable leaving it under the Teen Rating, I hope you guys can understand. Thank you for your patience.

### Notes for the Chapter:

I'm back to my parkour-like writing!

I... was not supposed to update this but I don't have a schedule so here we are. This is actually part of an AU I'm working on right now, based on the original chapter "three (prelude)" of this fic, so it may actually have some differences. I'm doing this because the other one ended up is sort of a cliffhanger...? Let's pretend it did because I wasn't as specific on how they got together as the others, so I thought I could just put some things in here instead of, y'know, breaking my self-imposed "short chapters" rule. Don't quote me on this rule, I will break it at some point.

Anyways, please excuse my rambling! I'm back on the Internet after a three-day power outage and I'm... weird. I wanted to write so here I am. Please enjoy!! This was beta-ed by the lovely Celepom, who is too good to me and my messy writing. Thank you!!

As a child, Ryoken was told by his father he was easy to understand.

It took him longer than it should have to realize that was not a compliment, but a criticism; and he learned this the hard way. Despite knowing his mother was unhappy, despite seeing the bruises and the glares and noticing the sometimes present absent-mindedness of her gaze, he never questioned

why. As a child he couldn't have. Much less so when Kiyoshi was there to make sure he grew up to be his perfect heir, the ideal prince, the sheer spitting image of him in everything but appearance.

The fantasy of a happy life Kiyoshi made up for him lasted for about eight years before the tragedy of what his life would become struck him in the face, quite literally— Kiyoshi was not a man who allowed mistakes and he did not hesitate to let Ryoken know he fucked up big time. To remind him that the events of that fateful day were all his fault. To make him feel as much frustration and pain as he must have when the Ignis escaped his grasp and left him with nothing but a curse, both on his lips and on the inside.

After discovering what Kiyoshi was trying to do, messing with higher beings and things he was obsessed with that no one else could comprehend, his mother took it upon herself to fool his every plan with the aid of some of her closest friends. But they all ended up dead, their families banishing and their lands and riches being stolen for the Kogamis' future— well, *most of them* ended up dead, and that's where Ryoken enters the picture.

His mother's friends, the ones that were brave enough, *stupid enough* to approach Kiyoshi and challenge him, died the same day Ryoken was ordered by her to take their child away and *run*, because she knew what was coming. Ryoken barely knew what was happening back then. Why had his father wanted to punish a wide-eyed kid with a sweet smile and flushed cheeks? Ryoken had only been given a flimsy explanation a week earlier and nothing more, so he was just as confused as said child when he guided him through one of their many secret exits to the back gardens until they reached the outskirts of town and ran further into the woods surrounding the beach shore. Stardust Road lit up their way, but there was a point at which they stopped.

Ryoken, a fool until his last days, didn't listen to his mother's orders and left the kid all alone, promising to come back and getting him to calm down by making him think of three things. Only to then turn his back on him and run back to, according to his young brain, save his mother from the bad guys. Make sure she was okay. A naïve, childish belief that his father would never hurt her keeping him motivated.

But all he found was pain.

The first time Ryoken questioned his father's morals was when he looked him in the eye, bodies thrown all over the throne room floor, his face covered in blood, fury in his gaze, a sword on one hand and his mother's limp arm on the other, only four words escaping his lips:

*"What did you do?"*

As a scared eight-year-old, it was only logical to say the truth when faced with such dominating presence, with such danger. He couldn't have come up with a lie that would satisfy his father anyway, or at least that what he tells himself at night. His honesty was both a curse and a blessing, or at least that's what his mother said to him after the fact, before things took an ugly turn once Ryoken answered with his own four words:

*"I let him go."*

That, he would learn, a few slaps and dozens of whip lashes on his back later, his mother's screams echoing in his ears, was his first mistake. He decided that day that it would be his last. If only because he never wanted to hear his mother suffer like that ever again. It might seem like a stupid move to some, to just hand over his free will and let his father shape him into whatever form he wanted as the curse of the Ignis tore apart his sanity, let him make him feel guilty over saving an innocent life, over wanting to make sure the only person that ever truly cared for him was alright—

But his father has his way, up until Ryoken realizes his mother is not there; mentally, spiritually, barely even *physically* for him. That she had become nothing but a shell of the woman she was, a shell for that thing his father sought out and became his doom, and he agrees with one thing when it comes to his mission, as he grows up to be the perfect warrior and learns everything about those *things* driving his mother insane there is to know:

He wants the Ignis *gone*.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Yes, I love pain.

I plan to finish this particular "life" in about three more shorts? The ending will probably be a bit different from the actual fic I'm writing, as in, it'll come quicker, but that's the fun on putting parts in here :3

I'm also going to cheat the concept a bit and add alternative timelines to canon events... don't blame me blame my inability to commit to the 100%.

I hope you guys enjoyed this!!

## 6. five

### Summary for the Chapter:

TW for Suicide, Blood, and Murder. See tags for more specifics. This one is also sexually suggestive.

### Notes for the Chapter:

This is for Yoz, who inspired me to try new things  
This is probably not what you were expecting exactly, but I hope you like it! This was also shamelessly inspired by a couple of Taylor Swift songs like Ready For It and of course, Getaway Car. I'm trash but I like it. Listen if you want to picture this chapter even better. Hope everyone enjoys!

Yusaku and Ryoken are not males in every single life.

In fact, they very often don't fit into the gender binary, but the fifth time they find each other they are both young women looking for a good time. They are in a shady bar, on the red district of a nameless city enjoying themselves without any company, and their eyes meet from across the room. It's as accidental as it is fate pulling them together; everything is a coincidence and yet it isn't when you know this is not their first rodeo.

Ryoken is the one to approach Yusaku. She is an ethereal beauty, much like always, all lovely curves, perfect lips, elegant walk and blue eyes so pale they could drown you, an ideal wet dream. She looks dangerously innocent to anyone that may not know better, with her tight little skirt and her sharp unsuspecting eyes that are nothing but a show. Her walks turn all heads around and many stare after her with wishfulness in their gaze, but she only has eyes for one person tonight.

There's a hint of spice in the way she sits down and leans in close once Yusaku gives her permission to occupy that vacant seat beside her, shoulders brushing and making them both delight at the unexpected excitement the touch brings. It was easy for Yusaku to say yes; she is not

going to say no to a girl that moves like a panther and probably bites just as hard, and she noticed that Ryoken's been staring at her since she saw her walk in, at her clever eyes and downturned lips, and she does not waste this chance she gives her.

"Is a girl like you usually alone around these parts?" Is her opening statement, simple but laced with promise. It wouldn't be charming if it wasn't her saying it with just the right look from under her eyelashes and the perfect playful tilt to her voice. Yusaku pretends to be only mildly impressed, but in reality she's captured by her siren-like aura, needing to get even closer like she carries a magnetic feel around her. She's gorgeous in every way possible and knows it; Ryoken is not shy to flaunt her beauty, and it somehow doesn't come off as insulting or overconfident.

Ryoken's question is justified, though. Yusaku does not look like she belongs to the late night scene, but that's just a part of the charade. Of the game. She has much more interesting goals in mind, and isn't easily swayed by others. This once though, something about the curl of Ryoken's mouth and the quiet, hidden confidence of her shoulders that makes her want to put her guard down and be honest, even if only halfway.

"I'm here to steal from the bartender. He did me wrong a week ago," she shrugs. Ryoken laughs at it, a sound so charming it's almost fake, but Yusaku just leans in closer and continues, making eye contact. "You look like you may be into that."

Ryoken's innocent smile turns into a sharp smirk, and she allows her eyes to run all over Yusaku's form. She's incredibly beautiful as well, different from Ryoken but just as breathtaking; there's no tight dress or treacherous heels, but her eyes have just the right amount of mischief for her taste and her white button up is just open enough to allow a teasing hint of collarbone to show. She's just her favorite type, but at the same time she looks like so much more— Ryoken wants to know what that spark is about, and why she's the only one who dared come close to it.

She loves mysteries.



“I guess I am,” she mumbles, and Yusaku shivers. Ryoken has always looked much better when she’s not trying to play dumb. Her voice is hypnotizing, smooth and honey-like; she might as well dive right into those ocean eyes and drown. When Ryoken gestures with her head at the bar, she purposely bares her neck a bit, and Yusaku’s eyes lock on the curve of her throat for three seconds too long. Suddenly, Ryoken isn’t finding this as funny as before, something in the darkest of Yusaku’s eyes making her mouth run dry. “Fancy an Old Fashioned?”

Yusaku has no idea how in point she is about Ryoken being into burying hatches properly. Despite how she claims she’s only a free spirit spending her family’s fortune with no care for anything and her determination to have a taste of every type of girl that catches her eye, she’s no fool, and not someone you want to mess with. When no one is watching, Ryoken is running away from both the law and her family and stealing from unsuspecting idiots to survive; her dad was a mafia boss that got caught and then murdered by her own unwaring hand, and she has known no home ever since. She could go back and take charge, but something about the endless road seemed tempting— and Yusaku’s lips getting progressively wet and red with every careful sip of her drink even more so.

Yusaku is different and yet identical to her. She was born under a meaningless name and changed it about three different times to avoid leaving a trace of her crimes and being tracked by the people she’s done wrong, and her day to day consisted on getting credit card numbers and hacking bank accounts to support herself. She never knew a family, she never knew a home and she was never naive at any point in her life. How she ended up like this is not an unusual story; she was an unlucky orphan who decided she was going to survive, no matter the cost. The quiet, unspoken companionship she finds in Ryoken is welcomed, and the liquor-like burn of her gaze over her skin is worth forgetting about whatever petty debt she was going to settle a million times over.

It’s no wonder they’re instantly into each other. The night progresses as if they weren’t both measuring up the other, trying to trip each other up, but the tension that builds between them is both exciting and explosive. They both know getting attached is a bad idea, that it’s bound to end badly, but a

few drinks making their mind foggy, a couple of heated kisses that end up with smudged lipstick stains on their faces and Ryoken getting on her knees in the back of the bar is all it takes to make them both forget about risks.

They are inseparable from that point forwards. Nothing comes in between them, not even their own secrets. Somehow they manage to make it work, driving together from town to town and doing their own business while they think the other just stays in whatever hotel room they're renting or goes out to entertain themselves. It gets to a point in which the lying doesn't even matter to them at all, as long as they have each other.

They both refuse to admit it's love, unless they're gasping out promises to the other while in the throes of passion, breathing heavily into each other's ear. It's an obsession, a very dangerous one, but their year together is filled with nothing but freedom and adventure; they feel like they're whole for the first time in their lives, like they found that missing piece of the puzzle. They both have things to lose if they dare to confess those feelings in any other situation, but beggars can't be choosers, especially when it comes to emotions, and sometimes things slip out, but they ignore it in a foolish attempt to not caught feelings. It's much too late for that, though.

Things turn ugly when Ryoken's past comes knocking on Yusaku's door.

It's almost funny how somehow they were always just out of the other's reach until that fateful night at that bar, their paths so closely intertwined without them realizing it. It turns out Yusaku wasn't always this careful about who she screwed over, much less when they wronged her first—the anonymous phone call the police got about the locations of Ryoken's dad hideouts was reckless, as was forgetting to delete any existing registry of it and her whole identity before jumping states and changing her name.

The lackeys that come for her are very surprised to find her in the arms of the daughter of their former boss, and as the screams of treachery rise and guns are drawn, there's little option left but to run away together, no questions asked, stealing their remaining money and a car and slamming on the gas, no hesitation at any point with Ryoken on the wheel.

An argument breaks out. Ryoken never loved her dad; he was a bastard through and through with inhumane means of dealing who didn't trust her enough to handle their business despite being raised for it, but she was taught about family pride and it is ingrained deep into her bones, so finding out her lover is responsible for the harsh turn her life took is both heartbreaking and fills her with anger. Yusaku, in contrast, feels disgusted with herself, falling for someone who was involved in all the crap that family did to rise to the top, and when they finally lose their chasers they decide to stay at a motel in a town in the middle of nowhere for the night.

It's their last night together, and it's filled with bitterness and anger. Their eyes don't meet, and sharing the bed is almost impossible.

When Yusaku wakes up the next morning, she's alone, there's no keys, no money, no note— Ryoken left her alone without a word or a goodbye and with no means of getting herself back on her feet. She refuses to cry about it, instead getting her anger out by punching a guy who tried to grope her at the local bar and stealing his wallet, determined to make the most of it. From that moment forwards, she decides to move on. Leave it all behind, no matter how hard it is and how much it hurts her that Ryoken just left her like that. She has no idea of how painful it was for her to do this, of how much willpower it took her to walk away, of how many tears she didn't shed, but as far as she's concerned right now, it doesn't matter.

It doesn't end there, though.

It takes them about three years to come across each other again. Ryoken is back home, fixing the mess she left behind and getting rid of the disgusting ways of her father for good. There isn't one day that goes by without her thinking of Yusaku, but she's determined to leave it buried in the past where it belongs, no matter how much it hurts her. She's not a bitter runaway anymore, nor is she the child everyone at home believed her to be; she takes control of her life and decides she won't ever let it go again. Ordering her minions to stop looking for her father's killer and the person responsible for him getting caught is her last goodbye to that blissful year she spent with Yusaku. No more daydreams, she promises herself, but at night Yusaku's name is the only one that occupies her lips and her thoughts.

Yusaku has also been busy. Despite Ryoken leaving her stranded, she found her way back through stealing a parked motorcycle and then changed her name once again, this time to something as far away from her previous one as possible, just in case. She decided to go back to what she was doing before, getting hired by shady people to get them the information they needed for handsome payments instead of just settling for pickpocketing credit cards out of people's wallets. It's not long before she gets a name for herself, infamous for her skill, but she can barely register any of it over the sound of her heartbeat late at night. As angry as she was at finding out she was getting frisky with the enemy, her feelings for Ryoken never let up, and it is with a shaky sigh, a tear and a shrug that she decides to go looking for her after all this time.

When they lock eyes again, it is not a coincidence, but it's also not ideal.

Yusaku was traced by the local police from the second she stepped into this city, old files with her picture but another name resurfacing and claiming she was suspicious of several crimes, and it doesn't take them much to find more evidence of her changing identities, stealing, committing fraud. The police took this to their advantage; the fact that the mafia they previously took down was back on its feet never escaped them, as their influence was much more widespread than ever, so they came to the logical conclusion that a criminal of Yusaku's caliber would probably be getting involved with them.

So, when Yusaku finally gets the chance to talk to Ryoken again, she gets interrupted by the police bargaining in and someone shooting her in the back, the bullet going right through her and making her fall to her knees, bleeding fast.

How Yusaku survived for long enough for Ryoken to get her inside her underground private bunker is both a mystery and a miracle. They both know it's the end; they have no way out and the police will probably not take long to get inside the bunker, as they probably were prepared for something like this. Yusaku can barely breathe or talk from the pain, and Ryoken's hands shake as she holds her, tears of fear and anger running down her cheeks. She doesn't want to go out without a bang though, so she loads up an ancient revolver for emergencies and stands her guard, pointing

at the bunker door and praying for the first time in her life so she'll get a chance to apologize to Yusaku for leaving her like that.

Yusaku has another idea.

With her hand covered in blood, Yusaku guides the revolver on her hand and presses the barrel against her own chest. Ryoken's eyes widen in horror, but there's no doubt to what she's asking.

"No," Ryoken shakes her head, tears coming back at full force, a stubborn, angry curl to her lips. It's the messiest she's ever looked, but she doesn't care one bit. Yusaku thinks it's a beautiful sight to die to, if she's being frank. "No, I'm *not* doing that, I *can't*—"

"Please," Yusaku begs, squeezing her hand. She chokes on the word, aggravating her wound even further, but all Yusaku has to give to the pained whimper Ryoken lets out in response is a sad smile. "It's alright. Better you than them."

"I *can't*," Ryoken insists again, squeezing her hold on her even further, the cloth she held up to her wound completely coated. Above them, the police is clearly about to start opening the doors, but she doesn't care anymore. This request— Ryoken's done ugly things in her life, killed her own father and stepped on others to get to where she wanted to be, tricked people and ruined lives, but this is too much for her. "No, no, not you. I can't."

The smile that Yusaku gives her is fearless and has an edge of deep-rooted sadness to it, but there's also unmistakable acceptance. "You *can*. This.... this is it. The last thing I'll ever ask of you. Please."

The determination in her eyes is so strangely familiar and painful that the statement settles over Ryoken's spirit heavily, making her shoulders drop. She bends down, pressing her lips to Yusaku's while swallowing down a sob. Her grip on the gun steadies just enough to guarantee it'll be quick enough to not cause Yusaku any more pain, and she turns off the safety with whispers of '*I'm sorry, I never should have left, I'm sorry*' against the skin of her forehead. There's a pool of blood on the floor now, all over her

clothes and her skin, and she swallows down the bile that raises to her throat at the smell.

It's the first time in her life that the smell of blood has made her recoil in disgust.

Still, when her finger lands on the trigger her mind is made up. Yusaku is right; they either go down together on their own terms or suffer through – *another* – life apart. Ryoken has too much pride to let this be her end, and now that she has Yusaku back there's not one regret left in her life. She promised herself that the only one in control would be her, that she would not take shit from others, but she bends easily to Yusaku's will.

Still, she hesitates, and when Yusaku reassures her once again it'll be fine, moves to her ear and closes her eyes, taking a deep breath in hopes of sending her message properly.

"I love you," she says, her voice wrecked and wet from her tears, a tiny bit of desperation leaking into it, but it's too late to go back. "We'll meet again."

She pulls the trigger. The sound of the revolver startles her even another sob rips out of her, and Yusaku can only gasp before she goes still. She waits for a couple of seconds, but it's clear she's done it, that she literally put a bullet in her heart. There's no doubt, but she can barely register the shock of it before she's making another decision, one she knows she will also not regret and is even thankful for.

Ryoken does not hesitate this time when she brings the gun up to her mouth, eyes trained on the bunker entrance, choking in both her tears, her anger and the unbelievable pain in her heart. She thought killing her dad was hard— this was a million times worse, and she knew she couldn't live like this. May her last act be a petty one; it's all or nothing. She will have nothing more and nothing less than that. She's the master of her own destiny, has been since the second she was born, and she would be until her last breath.

*'I would die for your lips,'* she joked once with Yusaku, back when things were just beginning. She never thought she'd meant it like *this*, but that's probably just how life works sometimes.

Ryoken pulls the trigger just as the door opens. The police gets nothing but slumped over bodies and enough proof of their crimes to put the lackeys in jail, and nothing else, just like she wanted.

May they meet again peacefully next time.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Was this as painful to read as it was writing it? :)

## 7. six

### Summary for the Chapter:

t/w for: many mentions of blood, implied abuse, implied non-con. also this one has very suggestive and obvious sexual content.

### Notes for the Chapter:

i don't even know what this is i wrote this in a day. my sickness cured my writer's block, you heard it here first folks. yes i'm aware this is almost the same length as all the other chapters together. no, i don't care.

pls enjoy!!

Next time they see each other, Ryoken cheats and skips a few lifetimes.

It's a completely conscious decision he makes— he happened to be born as the son of a duke in the year 1558, and also happened to be murdered shortly before turning twenty-one. He was to marry an older woman that bought him from his family for his weight and then some in gold, a deal that had him seething because he '*was no virgin girl to sell*', among other regrettable quotes He held a lot of resentment about the marriage part; he was a stubborn boy that refused to settle down and have heirs until the point his family got sick of it, but he wasn't bitter about the murder at all.

After all, he arranged it himself.

A few months before that nasty, bloody business, Ryoken met his Sire— a powerful, dangerous sharp man with fangs as teeth and everyone's neck at his disposal for a quick snack. That was an accident, of course; Ryoken was supposed to become another helpless boy that would feed his Sire until he died or he got bored of him, but his tenacity apparently made him interested in him. Ryoken was not swayed by any sweet words or promises of glory nor was he tempted by the fancy jewels and velvety fabrics and endless tea



dates, or the great amount of ladies that would kneel at his feet just from being his Sire's favorite.

He had a price for his company and his blood: he would let him feed off him on the condition that his Sire would teach him things about the creatures of the night, from how to protect himself to how to become one. It was an easy deal, one his Sire did not mind at all, and when the time came for Ryoken to travel to the place his wedding would be taking place in, his Sire decided to grant him his wish for freedom and helped him arrange the accident that would end his human life and result in him turning into a vampire, with strength and power under his skin, beauty and allure in his every movement and a thirst that could only be quenched by the blood of those he despised— or, more often than not, those he fancied.

Ryoken isn't proud to say he murdered half of his family in blind rage and hunger, or that he then arrived just in time for his wedding day, covered in blood, and had a drink out of every guest, but he can admit he has no regrets over it. Most of those he killed were old, frail people that found him a monster even during his human life, for his eyes lingered a bit too much on the rough lips and sharp jawlines of the boys that came around and always got too attached to one particular sparring partner or two, or even to the caretakers of the horses.

*If they want a monster, they'll have one*, is what he thought back then, which he now thinks was a foolish, childish temper tantrum. He still wonders if he became a vampire purely out of sheer pettiness, but doesn't linger much on the thought anymore. Life became much more interesting thanks to it, after all.

He stayed with his Sire for fifty years before he got bored and decided to travel the world by himself. He never saw him again, not for a lack of wanting to but because his Sire was always like that; he liked to appear and disappear to his own liking, and was as untraceable as a millennia old vampire could be. Ryoken didn't need to be hand-held through immortality, or at least that's what he thought.

He was perhaps a bit too young and drunk on his immortal life when he went off on his own, and it caused him to get reckless. He had to flee towns

and villages more than once because he got caught having way too much fun with his teeth buried in some boy's neck and his hand down his pants in the back of whorehouses after he had found one that was more into his stuff than into the ladies inside, and more often than not that resulted in him having to kill at least a handful of people on his way out, at least at the beginning.

Sometimes, he was found with women instead, because he met a few of them that were able to tickle those things he likes in people and that they unfortunately rarely hit the mark on like men do. It was easier to not be caught when it was a woman in his arms, but not nearly as fun to get away from the accusations.

He was a bit ruthless, and lacked the elegance that he would eventually conquer, but his Sire had warned him that young vampires were always like that, too thirsty and too stupidly strong to control themselves on the face of infinite possibilities.

He falls in love a couple of times, even though those romances mostly feel dull now. One he had to kill himself because he turned him into a vampire and didn't take into account how drunk he would be on power, how mad it would drive him to be; the other he hid his true nature from and abandoned when he couldn't handle the sight of her falling in love with the boy her parents introduced her to in hopes of a marriage.

Like all things with fate – when it comes to these two, at least – it is the third time he falls in love that sticks.

It is three hundred years and so after the end of his human life that Ryoken comes across Yusaku. He's just passing through a small town filled of high-class families, hoping to have a quick snack and a nap to rest from his exploration of the countryside, when a ball is announced for the eighteen birthday of the daughter of the town mayor, and everyone is invited.

Ryoken immediately jumps at the opportunity, because it's been years since he's been able to attend a ball, and they were always great ways to grab a bite. He's mastered the art of looking unsuspecting and kind and fierce at the same time, and that kind of aura attracts all kinds of interesting, often

delicious enough people. Humans still aren't too fond of his preferences in company, but by now he's learned how to deal with those that decide to act or comment on it; a well-placed glare or particularly sharp smile keeps them away and suddenly uninterested—or rather, scared.

It does the contrary for the ones Ryoken is interested in, of course. Most of them find him '*devilishly charming*'. It's not a compliment he takes lightly.

It is incredibly easy for him to mingle among the guests and to gather his own courtship of girls and boys to choose from later. He has his eye set on one that loves to cling to Ryoken's arm and laughs at every word that comes out of his mouth; a dumb shell, most would call him, but it is free spirits like him that's fun to see go quiet as they writhe and squirm underneath him... in more ways than one.

But then one of his conquests points him towards the supposed birthday girl and he almost chokes on his wine.

From afar, Yusaku doesn't look any different from any of the other girls, except for the fact that they're wearing a suit and they don't look like a girl at all. An awful way of explaining things, but it's the only way he knows how: tiny waist, expensive tailored suit, pale skin and a hairstyle so complicated Ryoken almost flinched from how hard their hairline was being pulled at. Up close, they're not that remarkable for Ryoken's old eyes, but they carry a certain cold beauty that he remembers being obsessed with when he was human, and still is now, no matter the gender.

Their neck is long and unmarked and their lips so pink and plum that Ryoken already knows what he wants to have for dinner when he gets tired of his chosen snacks, but it's hard to get their attention. Yusaku is careless, but not because they're dumb or childish or prissy. To the contrary, Yusaku's mind is as sharp as Ryoken's fangs and they genuinely can't bother to please everyone like high-class people are supposed to.

They get asked to sing by an old lady that claims to be a friend of the family and in response they just tells her that their family didn't hire the best singer in town just so they could shatter their eardrums with their tone-deaf attempts. A guy with a suit adorned with gold trimming approaches them

with a charming smile and a glass of wine and they send him off to dance with one of their younger cousins.

Ryoken asks them for a dance and they just stare before asking if they have seen him before. He answers no, of course, because he genuinely hasn't, and then Yusaku takes him by the hand and pulls him to the dance floor, wrapping one of Ryoken's arms so tight around their waist that their chests meet and his nose brushes against the shell of their ear. The other hand Ryoken uses to lead the dance, but they can hardly move with how close they are together, and it's barely seconds into their very inappropriate, very public dance before Ryoken smirks and whispers in their ear.

"You're an odd one," he says, enjoys the way Yusaku sighs and nods, perfectly at peace. "This is hardly proper of such a high standing person like you."

"I don't care," is their response, their lips brushing over Ryoken's neck from how close they are. He hears whispering from several angles, probably men and women debating about who's going to come in and save one or both of them from being so sacrilegious in public when Yusaku is already breaking so many rules, but Ryoken doesn't care. Instead, he twirls Yusaku around and then grabs them back into that same embrace, albeit with a bit more inches of space between them. He doesn't want to be thrown out of the party, after all.

"You don't think I'm weird," Yusaku asks, but it sounds more like a statement, looking up at Ryoken through thick eyelashes. "I'd say that's odd. Everyone here thinks I am. My father refuses to believe me when I tell him I'm a boy and decided to marry me off to some rich stuck up from a few towns over."

Ryoken almost snorts, his eyebrows raising at such a sharp tongue. He likes that attitude.

"You're not the first person I've met that's been born in the wrong body," he pauses, gauging Yusaku's reaction, but gets nothing more than a semi-shocked widening of his eyes. He wouldn't be surprised if he thought he

was alone in the world. “I’m surprised your father allowed you that suit, though I’m not complaining. You look incredibly gorgeous in it.”

Yusaku’s ears get a bit pink, and he breaks off eye-contact with a sigh. Ryoken notices the rush of blood to his whole face, hidden under careful layers of make-up, and licks his lips.

“My mother made him,” he says softly, swallowing thickly. “She’s the only one apart from my siblings that understands.”

“I’m glad you have some people on your side, then,” Ryoken whispers, trying to shoot him a quick but reassuring smile. Yusaku goes even pinker over it, which tells him he’s not completely immune to his charms. “It wouldn’t be fair otherwise—”

“I know you, don’t I?” Yusaku interrupts, frowning, to which Ryoken hums and shakes his head. He really has no idea what he’s on about; Ryoken would have remembered meeting someone like him before in all his three hundred-years and some of life. “I think I do, and we just don’t remember.”

“You have some interesting ideas,” Ryoken feels a hand fall roughly on his shoulder from behind and smiles down at him, letting a bit too much teeth show. Yusaku looks up with brilliant green eyes and barely glances at the sharpness of them. “I’ll see you around. Thank you for the dance, and have a very happy birthday.”

Ryoken bows his head at him, taking his hand and bringing it up to his lips to kiss it over the gloves he’s wearing, maintaining eye contact for a few seconds too long. When he turns, it is to glare at the interruption, finding it comes from the same gold-wearing idiot from before. He cowers under the pressure of his gaze and he barely keeps himself from smirking at him in cold satisfaction, then moves on to the crowd he’s gathered over the evening.

His arm candy from earlier instantly wraps an arm around his shoulder and snorts. “The birthday girl is a handful, isn’t she?”

Ryoken barely keeps himself from correcting him, instead biting his tongue before leaning in to whisper in his ear. An hour later sees him with his teeth attached to his neck and their bodies pressed together so tightly that Ryoken can feel the other's arousal, but he doesn't quite feel like fucking this guy after such a comment about Yusaku. He drains him instead, and hides the body so well that he knows it will take them at the very least a month to find him.

He comes back to the party, makes sure to track down Yusaku's mother, and charms his way into an invite to stay with them for as long as he needs to until it's time for him to go back home through a sap story about a dead family and traveling the world, which isn't completely a lie.

She's a headstrong woman that has so many children it's hard to keep a track of them, and her husband is a man that's almost double her age with a permanent frown etched over his face that deepens every time Yusaku happens to be around him. Ryoken makes sure the old man gets his champagne served last when he volunteers to relieve Yusaku's mother of her duties of being the host for a few minutes. Ryoken keeps her in his arm afterwards, promising his earlier companions that he would make up for it aplenty, in any way they wanted to. With that, he has meals guaranteed for at least a month.

Yusaku side-eyes him until the end of the party, and then continues to do so as Ryoken spends his first three nights sleeping under his family's household. He learns that Yusaku is made to wear skirts in public but lounges around his home with pants and shirts his older brothers left him behind. He doesn't mind make-up, but despises corsets and to wear the full length of his hair free since it's so heavy. He's forbidden from cutting his hair short, and pretends his father isn't in the room unless he addresses him by the proper pronouns.

He also learns that the *'rich stuck up from a few towns over'* is the gold-wearing idiot that spent the whole night dancing with all of Yusaku's cousins and sisters per his request. And apparently the arm candy he drained was a cousin of his. Oops. Well, things happen like that sometimes.

“I refuse to be courted like some callow girl,” was his answer when Ryoken asked about his attitude towards the engagement, and then he never mentioned the matter again, since he could tell Yusaku found it terribly funny to see the boy stumble through his requests in an attempt to make him show some interest in him.

Yusaku only truly softens to his unexpected company almost a month in, when Ryoken tells him he’s a vampire over some tea in the study room. They’re alone, and Ryoken only tells him because he thinks Yusaku would figure it out anyways, with enough time.

“Oh,” Yusaku says, glancing up from his book with a frown. “That makes sense.”

Ryoken, despite his attempts to appear cool and unaffected knowing that Yusaku drove him mad in a way he could not explain, chuckles a bit breathlessly and raises an eyebrow. “It does?”

Yusaku shoots him a look. “You don’t sleep. And you barely touch your meals. Also, I’ve seen you sneaking in those girls you were with at the party. I assumed you were fucking, but I never heard anything.”

“I did fuck a few,” Ryoken shrugs, nonchalant, and watches Yusaku struggle not to smile. “Not in here, though. I like your mother too much to disrespect her like that. Not so much your father.”

Yusaku looks back down to his book, rolling his eyes. “Where did you fuck them, then?”

Ryoken smirks, stands up and walks over to lean down and whisper in Yusaku’s ear, running a finger down his cheek. “In their own homes, of course.”

Ryoken leaves the room after that, but he smells the way Yusaku’s blood rushes to his cheeks, how his adrenaline spikes. It stays on his nose for the whole day, and it makes him bring over yet another of his conquests at night. This time he’s purposely not careful about it, takes his meal in the

hallway that leads to Yusaku's bedroom, hears his door opening and the little gasp before it closes again.

Once he's done, Ryoken knocks on his door and finds Yusaku still blushing from head to toe, covering himself with his bedcovers. Ryoken spies the hint of a nightgown underneath and smirks, which probably looks a bit grotesque because he barely bothered to clean his mouth before taking his victim home.

Yusaku seems bewildered. "That was a boy."

Ryoken raises his eyebrows. "I just showed you how much of a vampire I am and that's what you fixate on?"

"I didn't know you also..." he trails off, looking off to the side before meeting Ryoken's eyes again, his blush deepening. Somehow, despite the fact that Ryoken is completely sated, he feels hunger. He regrets not going to his victim's place instead. "Forget it, I should have... imagined you—that you're into men."

Ryoken hears the unspoken *'you're into men as well'* and runs his tongue over his teeth to clean them up before smiling, a bit softer. "Yeah. It wasn't any more accepted than it is now, when I was human."

Yusaku swallows thickly and nods. "I can imagine."

Ryoken hums. "Good night, love. Don't stress about it."

Then Ryoken walks away and tries not to think on how obvious it is that Yusaku is a virgin.

It's hard, of course, a thought that makes him snort, but not impossible to ignore. Yusaku becomes more fidgety around him, stares more than he already did, and Ryoken can't resist teasing him; sitting a bit too close to him, lowering his voice to that husky whisper that makes most people melt, making innuendos every time he has the chance to and no one else is around, making him nap safely with his head on his lap until it becomes a custom for them to do so.



One time, he goes out with him and watches Yusaku struggle to stop himself from pulling at his skirt every five seconds, wrapping himself in his coat to hide how the corset he was forced into pushes up his chest. Ryoken makes sure to act as a wall between him and the rest of the townsfolk, and when he's done with his errands he takes him into the woods off the side of his family home, where he hid the body from the boy he drank dry the first night he spent in town, and convinces him to let him burn the clothes.

"They're expensive," is Yusaku's protest, to which Ryoken scoffs. He tries again. "I'll be practically naked."

"Nothing you father can't afford a hundred times over. Besides," Ryoken shrugs, gesturing towards his coat and then his own jacket. "You have this."

Yusaku seems to appreciate the fact that he's not making dirty jokes for once. "Fine."

Then he takes off the dress and Ryoken helps him out of the corset. He rips it, because it's extremely satisfying to do so and he likes the resulting shiver he gets, and the blush over Yusaku's freckled back that goes up his neck and he imagines all the way to his cheeks, but then Ryoken turns around and lets him take care of the rest, whistling to fill the silence. When Yusaku's done, wrapped safely in his coat and Ryoken's jacket to hide his undergarments and chest, Ryoken takes one look at the pile of clothes in the ground and chuckles at the little jump Yusaku makes when they spontaneously combust.

"A warning would have been *nice*," he complains, so Ryoken rolls his eyes and guides him back into the house through the back, making sure no one hears them or sees them.

"How am I supposed to explain this?" he asks him once they're inside his bedroom, while Ryoken stares at wall and he gets dressed. "'*Sorry, mother, a vampire burned my clothes?*'"

"Don't you have a thing for throwing new things out the window?" Ryoken mumbles, his mind more on how hungry he genuinely is and less on the crazy things Yusaku's done to hammer it home that's he's not a girl. He's

running out of people to drink from already, mostly because he's been a bit of a glutton about his meals and bitten way too many places instead of sticking to one, and he's avoided taking more than a few sips at a time for the sake of not leaving a trail of death bodies. The rich stuck up's cousin was found a bit later than he thought they would, which is why he even took Yusaku to those woods, and since then Ryoken's been keeping his fangs away from any neck, wrist or thigh in hopes of the trail going cold.

He was interrogated, of course, but he claimed they were just having some stronger drinks outside of the party—which is something they actually did; it took Ryoken quite a few beers to get the guy to loosen up and fall all over himself to finally do what he had obviously been waiting to all night and kiss Ryoken. Some vampires get off on taking their victims by force, but Ryoken likes it better when they can barely think of him without becoming a mess.

A bit narcissistic, but just because he's a monster it doesn't mean he lacks basic decency. And blood does taste better when overrun by desire instead of fear, in his most humble opinion.

He tells Yusaku all about this a couple of months after they burned the clothes, minus the how-he-likes-his-victims part. He just snorts and closes the book he's reading to look up at Ryoken, head resting on his lap. "The only reason you didn't get arrested right away was your convenient friendship with my parents, not some clever set up."

"Can't it be both? I feel like both is plausible," Ryoken runs a finger down Yusaku's temple, pressing it against the corner of his lips and then over his bottom lip. "You need to stop pouting. It's *ridiculously* charming."

Yusaku pouts harder, tries to knock it off and fails. "Stop *flirting*."

"Your lost," Ryoken smirks, and almost gets hit in the face by Yusaku's book. Thank goodness for vampire reflexes. "I'm just telling the truth!"

Yusaku shoots him a dirty look before he's back to reading, to which Ryoken sighs and stares at the ceiling, closing his eyes to get some

semblance of a nap. He's been courting Yusaku for a little while now, and it's going spectacularly well, except for the fact that he's *engaged*.

Yusaku tries to act like he doesn't care he's practically being given away for some gold and a big party just so his father could get his supposed weirdness off his back, but Ryoken knows better. He's seen that same look in hundreds if not thousands of brides-to-be, the fake bravery and the little signs of resistance before he's being forced into leading the life of a good wife and an even better mother, or else.

He sees it in the way Yusaku sometimes stares out the window like he wants to run away, and Ryoken wants to give him that. He wants to show him Paris and London and Madrid and New York and the thousands of places in between and beyond, but Ryoken knows that for that Yusaku would have to leave behind a life— not necessarily a human life, but just one in general. Ditch his name and identity and never return until he was done, and by then he would find little brothers and sisters all grown up and his father gone – that man was not going to live past the age of sixty, Ryoken would bet – and his mother older, saddened because of the sudden disappearance of her baby.

Ryoken knows because he's done favors like this before, taken humans to see the world with him for decades until they decide it was time to come back. Most didn't find it reassuring.

He couldn't do that to Yusaku, and because he was promised, he couldn't pop in every few years to take him on a trip and then bring him back safely. He refused to turn him into a vampire, because that would dull all he is and could be. Ryoken wasn't anything but a clever boy with an even cleverer tongue when he was human. Yusaku has far more potential to lead a fulfilling life than he ever did, as long as he didn't break under his husband-to-be.

Ryoken would stick around just enough to keep that from happening.

Weeks after that little talk, Ryoken is starving to the point he's taken to actually eat all of the food he's served at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Yusaku shoots him weird looks for it every time, but it's either that or

hunting rats and whatever animal there is deep in the woods behind the family home. He hates animal blood. It's just never enough, so Ryoken might as well process as little of the human food as he can and think about his predicament.

He's run out of people to drink from. Young people, at least; his early picks were a big no-no because they were developing resistance to the bite magic, and it was harder to get a drink from those he doesn't have much of a background on. Only Yusaku himself and his siblings were being spared from his hunger, and old people were always too dangerous to drink from. Middle aged humans are just annoying about how young he looks for him to lure more than a few, so he gives up on them. He's been in this town for so long, Ryoken has only killed four people to avoid suspicions. He could have left that number in one, the rich cousin, but he *has* to eat.

It should be a week before he starts suffering from the side-effects and he's completely unable to walk under the sunlight and come near running water bodies. He's already getting sickly pale, and the maids are starting to whisper about him carrying a virus, comments that make him roll his eyes. He's sleeping longer hours now, skipping breakfast— it's all extremely annoying, and his only salvation is that Yusaku's fiancé is throwing a fucking pre-wedding celebration ball to show off how rich he is and to try to get Yusaku to look at him as anything other than a mild annoyance.

He's insisted on Yusaku's father bringing at least half of his townsfolk with him, which is a bit excessive, but Ryoken is not complaining. Yusaku is, though.

"It's horrible," he says, hiding in Ryoken's bedroom so the handmaidens won't force him into a dress to attend the celebration. He's wearing one of Ryoken's suits instead, from the pile he doesn't use anymore. He had the nerve to pull it from his closet and get it tailored without him noticing it. "*He's* horrible. Father could have at least picked someone more sensible, or at least that doesn't think and breathes money."

Ryoken, who really just wants to go so he can fucking *eat*, really doesn't have it in him to give him a speech about how men never change and he has to put his foot down and make them think he's doing what they want or

whatever. He's fucking hungry, and if they don't go now he will probably end up pushing Yusaku down and sinking his teeth in whatever flesh he can get his mouth on.

It's a very tempting thought, and he must admit only half of it comes from blood-thirsty hunger. The other half comes from his pants, which reminds him he also hasn't been fucking anyone either. Ugh.

"Listen, love," Ryoken calls, wrapping his arms around Yusaku's waist and resting his head on his shoulder to make eye contact through the mirror. Yusaku blushes, which makes Ryoken drool and swallow to keep the hunger down. One quick look at himself confirms he looks as famished as he feels. "You said you weren't going to fight this despite my offers to bury your fiancé more than couple feet under, so now you have to live with that."

"I wouldn't have to if you just—"

"I'm not having that discussion," Ryoken brings his hands up to fix the neck of Yusaku's suit jacket, then runs his hands down his front carefully to keep out any wrinkles, not lingering on his chest area. Yusaku doesn't even flinch, which does bring a smile to his lips. "Now, let's go. I'm starving."

Ryoken waits for Yusaku to nod, but instead he turns around and wraps his arms around his neck, leaning in so close Ryoken's fangs threaten to make a swift appearance. He raises his eyebrows at Yusaku, leaning away so they wouldn't be sharing a breath. Not because Yusaku's smells wrong, but because Ryoken can only smell blood and that's dangerously distracting.

"You can feed from me," he says, almost a mumble, and Ryoken feels his mouth filling again, his teeth hurting from the strain to keep himself from vamping out at him. After three hundred years, Ryoken's self-control is impeccable, but it's nowhere near his Sire's, who he knew sometimes plays doctor for the sake of research. What kind of research, he never cared.

Still, Yusaku's eyes are almost pleading, longing, and Ryoken knows without a doubt that he means it. It's clear he's gotten terribly attached to him, and the feeling is mutual. He's never felt quite this way before, like something was absolutely right and perfect. He's almost tempted to ruin the

rich stuck up's first night and take Yusaku for himself, to bare his neck and sink his teeth in and let all that blood rushing through his veins get into his mouth, his hands moving downwards and getting inside his pants, pressing where he would need it the most—

Ryoken bites the inside of his cheek and shakes his head. “No. Now, come on. You’ve been hiding enough, your father already left.”

Yusaku pouts, which is honestly a low blow, but Ryoken pulls through it and practically drags him down the stairs and into the carriage with his mother. She doesn’t even glance twice at the suit, which makes him think she definitely helped with this business. Ryoken goes on a separate carriage with Yusaku’s older siblings, who are all either as quiet as him or as hyperactive as the younger ones, but they have at least one thing in common: love for their brother and a liking of Ryoken that they can’t seem to get rid of. There’s a couple of them that aren’t quite accepting of Yusaku’s feelings, but those he doesn’t even bother with. They’re too many anyways.

“I’ll be honest!” One of the youngest of the oldest says, shaking Ryoken’s shoulder in a friendly manner and capturing the attention of all her siblings. They are discussing Yusaku’s fiancé, a conversation he does not wish to be a part of, but is just getting dragged into. “I think he should marry our sibling instead.”

“Oh, don’t be ridiculous now,” Ryoken immediately says, a bit panicked. He really doesn’t want to discuss this at all. “It’s not like that at all—”

“Please, we all know you’re in love,” if Ryoken could blush right now, he probably would be. “No one is judging!”

Ryoken then carefully extracts himself by the conversation by saying it doesn’t matter because Yusaku’s father wouldn’t back down. He wants him married and ready to bear children in hopes of ‘fixing’ Yusaku so he wouldn’t have to lead a harder life— a bit noble, but misguided and wrong. He refuses to acknowledge Yusaku’s gender and still wants him to fill the role of a female, still makes him unhappy with every decision he makes and still forces him to wear his hair long and wear skirts in public.

Yusaku doesn't know his father has a semblance of an excuse, and he won't tell him. It wouldn't make the wedding any better if he knew, after all.

The ball goes as Ryoken expected: lots of rich people going around talking about the stuff rich people do, food and drinks being grabbed off plates and trays, people dancing to music Ryoken finds beautiful yet dull after experiencing the underground night life of places like New York and Paris. It's all so prim and proper that Ryoken can't help but be glad when he once again gathers a small courtship of people around him, finds another arm candy for later and charms his way into a few dozen hearts to have snacks for the next few months to come. It's not quite as pleasing, because the feeling that he's cheating on Yusaku lingers in the back of his mind. He wouldn't if he had more reasons to avoid it, but he *needs* to eat.

And eat he does; this time he finds himself alone with not one but two boys, one his arm candy of twenty-five and one of twenty-eight. He has the pleasure of seeing them get drunk all over each other and then has a bite out of one once the other falls asleep. Then he drinks from the other one too, but he doesn't drain them for the sake of not rising any suspicions in this town as well. He leaves them there and sneaks into the main house to check whether he got a bit stained or not in the mirror, then comes back to the ballroom, where he runs face first into his Sire.

His Sire, the one he hasn't seen in more than two hundred years.

It's not long after a first quick, mindful-of-the-crowd hug, that Ryoken finds himself being sat down on a table, his Sire leaning in from beside him until they're almost inappropriately close. Their respective companions were dismissed for the sake of catching up, and it is with a smile that Ryoken welcomes the old banter and realizes nothing has changed. It's extremely easy, about an hour into the conversation, to tell his Sire everything about Yusaku and what he's been doing for him, which he gets a dirty look for.

"That doesn't sound like you," his Sire clicks his tongue, shaking his head and flicking his hair over his shoulder. His mere presence in this room in making several of the high-society turn up their noses, to which Ryoken almost smirks. His Sire only fits in the vampire crowd, not any other, no

matter his ability to blend in. “How many pretty boys didn’t you come across in those first fifty years? What’s the difference? The tragic story?”

“Not at all. It’s just him,” Ryoken pauses, rolls his eyes at the disgusted sound of his Sire. “Not all us are old enough to think human lovers are a waste.”

“They are! But I won’t judge you, you’re so young, like you said— are you even fucking him yet?” His voice is a bit too loud, and Ryoken has to laugh over most of his sentence to keep people trying to eavesdrop on them from understanding. “I guess that *was* a bit loud, but my question needs an answer.”

“No, I’m not. Can I go now? You’re awful at catching up, refusing to talk about anything that isn’t me,” Ryoken shakes his head, taking a sip out of his champagne. “I also promised someone a dance.”

“And I see that someone glaring at me like I’m going to be violently murdered. Don’t turn around,” his Sire adds hurriedly, holding Ryoken’s cheek with one hand and caressing his skin. It’s not a weird point of contact for them at all, but the reasons behind it are clearly different this time around. His Sire’s smile is devious. “Poor thing is jealous! You have clearly been teasing this boy within an inch of his life.”

Ryoken breaks away and turns around, smiles at Yusaku’s absolutely furious expression and then shrugs, winking. His Sire laughs behind him, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and leaning in to whisper in his ear, all while Yusaku watches and his face gets even redder by the second. To his side, his fiancé chats with his father, probably about his spectacularly bad political views, if the old man’s face was anything to go by.

“Please do yourself a favor and take that boy for yourself before the husband tries to. Otherwise, there’s going to be bloody murder on that wedding night, and I’m afraid he’s going to be the one shedding the blood, not *you*.”

Then his Sire stands up and leaves and Ryoken gets punished by the careless flirting by having Yusaku ignore him for the rest of the ball. They



don't get a dance, but at least Yusaku doesn't actually dance with his fiancé either. That would have been like rubbing salt in the wound.

The week leading up to the wedding is both boring and hilarious. Yusaku frustrates his new, future handmaidens to the point of no return, because he refuses to let them in his bedroom. That's mostly because Ryoken likes to sneak in through the window so he can annoy Yusaku first thing in the morning and he himself refuses to leave him alone in this unknown place, but also because Yusaku doesn't like strangers helping him dress, much less so if it's to put him inside a skirt. Ryoken helps him in and out of them instead, because otherwise Yusaku would be tearing them apart in his attempts to get them on quickly.

Yusaku's being forced into dresses at least once every day for lunch or dinner. He was at least given the choice for his poison, but it is not a nice argument, the one that breaks out against his father and the rick stuck up's parents, Yusaku and his mother. Two sides, one far louder and powerful than the other. It was a lost battle from the beginning; it's a miracle they even reached an agreement. The fiancé himself kept out of it, so Ryoken started a rumor that he was too much of a chicken to face Yusaku because he was afraid he has more balls than he does.

The rumor does get him banned from interacting with Yusaku, which is just fine by him because he already got a property for himself in this town and it's pretty easy to just take Yusaku there when no one is watching to hang out. If they catch Yusaku out, he just claims he was taking a walk or shopping.

The wedding day is admittedly bittersweet.

Yusaku begs him to take him somewhere far away a thousand times over the night before, panic settling in as he realizes what is about to happen after months of thinking *'oh, I'll get over it by then'*. He cries, so Ryoken dries his tears and talks sweet nothings into his ear to keep him calm, to remind him that he was going to be there, just a couple streets over, and that he would be fine, that he would take care of everything once his father was pleased and things had settled down.

“It’ll be too late by then,” Yusaku whispers, burying his face in his neck. “He will have already... it would be done by then. I don’t want that.”

“You can avoid it,” is Ryoken’s admittedly weak answer, to which Yusaku shakes his head. “You absolutely can. At least for a week? Your moon’s blood—”

“Don’t, that... they know to check for that,” Yusaku hugs him tighter, spills a few more tears, and Ryoken feels like he isn’t helping at all. “I don’t want him. Fuck, I really don’t. I just want you.”

Ryoken swallows, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath. “You have me.”

Then he brings Yusaku’s chin up, kisses his mouth with soft pecks until he can’t stand it anymore and then presses it against his far more urgently, licks his way inside until Yusaku is shaking and squirming with the intensity, until he has to lay him down over the pillows and hike up his nightgown – Ryoken knows not to touch his chest, knows Yusaku has no tolerance for that at all, from anyone, sometimes not even himself – to be able to run heated, open mouthed kisses down his neck, over his collarbones, down his thighs until he’s reaching—

Ryoken is glad, so very glad this house is surrounded mostly by woods and is far away from any neighbors because Yusaku is a screamer and he swears he’s never hear such beautiful sounds before. Fuck the timeless tunes Ryoken’s heard in his three hundred years, fuck all of the composers and singers and legends; his favorite song is right here and it’s for his ears only.

Ryoken doesn’t plan to fuck Yusaku at all. He figured that playing him like a violin would be enough to make him feel like he was giving away less of himself the next day, but he finds his restraint breaking and leaving him breathless and burning up with need. He’s never wanted anyone this badly, and he thinks Yusaku will drive him absolutely crazy with pure, absolute love. He’s all he’s ever wanted and he’s all he’ll ever need and nothing could compare to this, not blood, not careless sex, not the best nights he’s had in his life during all those travels around the world.

He leaves Yusaku marked; the traces of his fingers and mouth and teeth on his thighs, on his neck, his wrists and his hipbones— he leaves no available place untouched and then licks it all up to make sure they'll heal by morning and will not be visible because that sight of Yusaku, gasping and pink and writhing underneath him, of his skin purpled and tainted by the few slips of strength he had that just made Yusaku moan harder, they are all for him alone too, and he'll make absolutely sure of that, that no one else ever gets this.

The next morning, Ryoken struggles to let him go. Yusaku looks at him with so much fear when he drops him off in his bedroom that he can't help but lean in and kiss him, to linger, and then Yusaku stops him from leaving once more, his eyes wet.

"We have met before," he whispers, squeezes Ryoken's hand, blinks the tears away. "*We have*. I know it."

Ryoken feels some unspoken emotion swell on his chest and nods, the words ringing as truthful. "Of course we have."

Then he watches Yusaku walk down the aisle, looking absolutely miserable in a dress so intricate and a corset so tight that he knows whoever chose it has a thing against Yusaku's less than traditional behavior. A part of him protests so loudly that he spaces out and misses most of it. It means he's spared the sight of the rich stuck up kissing him on the lips and pretty much all the ceremony, at least. This is not the first time people he's come to like or even love on some capacity have come to marry – his second love comes fleetingly to mind – and usually Ryoken doesn't stick around for the wedding itself, leaves a few days or a week or a month before.

But it's somehow reassuring that he knows Yusaku is all but ready to bolt with him if Ryoken lets him. He should, he really should take him away to travel the world like he's been wanting to ever since he met him, but he needs to give it time, give Yusaku closure, let him decide if it was worth it to stay or leave. He needs two weeks.

And he doesn't get them.

Yusaku is lucky enough to avoid spreading his legs for his new husband for the first week without hiccup. The rich guy is way too drunk on all the celebrations being done to care, and is enjoying a little too much the sight of Yusaku sitting stiffly beside him on dresses he can barely breathe and sit in. Their rooms are separate, which is convenient, because Ryoken feeds from Yusaku for the first time just a couple days after the ceremony, his teeth deep in his neck and his fingers busy downstairs.

Their problem comes at the start of the second week, when Yusaku's blood moon starts, the husband gets agitated, and he has the very bad idea to eat him out anyways. It's not anything he's never done before, but by the time he leaves Yusaku's room and walks around town to get to his place he's too high on how good it felt to do that to realize he missed more than a few spots of blood during his clean up. Yusaku passed out practically five minutes after he was done, exhausted, so he couldn't have warned him either.

It's all over his shirt, for starters, because he forgot he made Yusaku sit over it so he wouldn't stain the sheets that much. There's a few spots on his jacket and dry traces over his mouth and on his hands— it looks like he murdered someone, but the problem here is that he didn't even realize he was absolute covered in it until a lady walking home from the theater started to scream while pointing at him

And this would have been fine had this not been extremely confusing for him for a few priceless minutes that got him surrounded by angry and freaked out townspeople with pointy weapons. A few of them were semi-familiar faces, so he decided it was best to let them have their fun and then charm his way out instead of causing a mess by attacked them in the middle of the street.

Then Yusaku's husband came bargain in speaking about vampires and his murdered cousin and the other three dead people in Yusaku's town and the gossipers started to whisper about all the ladies and men he became friends with and that all recalled to have moments of blank space on the nights they went out with him and it all goes on and on and on and on until he's ready to fight to escape— then someone mentions Yusaku and he just sort of gives up, because they're accusing him of being a witch.

Witch hunts still burn bright in Ryoken's mind from his early years. They were awful, merciless and often wrong. He couldn't bear the sight of a burning stake without remembering the screams of so many innocents. He was still soft when it happened, his humanity still close to his heart, but it has stuck ever since and he doesn't— he doesn't want to watch Yusaku burn. He knows they would. He can see it in their eyes, the frenetic, fearful looks that he remembers so well.

So he doesn't fight it. He confesses to his crimes, tells them you can kill a vampire by drowning – *not* on a moving water body, thanks— and hanging but that their body will not decompose, and tricks them all into leaving Yusaku alone and focusing on him. He doesn't plan on dying, of course; Ryoken will just disappear for a while after they drown him and keep himself from grabbing any bites before taking Yusaku away with him.

He gets one last talk with him when Yusaku manages to sneak into the place they're holding him in. He tells Ryoken to escape, but he explains he would rather die than have him burn. He should probably tell him about his plan, and he's about to when Yusaku just shakes his head, determination on face.

"It's alright," he sighs, nodding to himself, and Ryoken is incredibly confused. "We'll always be together. It'll take a while, but— I'll see you again."

Ryoken thinks, perhaps a bit foolishly, that Yusaku got his plan despite him not speaking a word of it to him. The next morning, Ryoken gets hanged, which is not fun, as always, but works to make him practice how to forget how to breathe for the drowning that follows. A bit of an overkill, really, but the coldness of the water works to make his skin frigid pale and sickly. There's some screaming when he's pulled out after an hour, which is kind of fun, and then a lot of people standing around waiting for him to get up.

Then a couple of people stake him. That is not fun at all, in any way possible, but Ryoken is too old to be killed by a piece of wood, much less one that isn't even properly aimed. The stakes weren't even blessed, which is the basis for it, or made from iron— it's all ridiculous, really.

Then they throw him back into the lake and Ryoken spends about three days underwater before he decides that's enough and sneaks out.

He spends a month away. It's a bit too long for his liking, but he wanted to be safe. He got him and Yusaku a house on the other side of the country and made sure to get him all he needed for any future traveling, a wardrobe that wasn't composed of hand-me-downs and old things stolen from his closet, an appointment for a haircut.

In retrospective, what happens next should have been expected. Yusaku is not a mind reader, and he also has a different perspective about life than Ryoken does, mostly because he's not a centuries old vampire. Yusaku lives in the now, now, *now*, Ryoken lives on a time limbo where the present is the future and the past is the present and the future is the past. He doesn't know evil schemes outside of those he's read about in books, and he doesn't know about how vampires die because he never asked, since he never thought that Ryoken could be gone.

He believed Ryoken would be fine, because he was a little bit too calm, a little bit too set on sacrificing himself. He was one-hundred percent trusting him to either come back to life a few days later or to just show up right after being thrown into the lake with that handsome smirk and more promises on his lips.

Instead, Yusaku waits for weeks and weeks and doesn't get the sight of Ryoken's still body out of his mind until he feels numb inside. His husband keeps forcing him into dresses and keeps sneaking into his room at night to have his way with him, touches where no one is supposed to and reacts violently when Yusaku tries to get him to stop. He never seemed like a cruel man, but he was one of those monsters that wasn't obvious to the naked eye. He punished Yusaku for all the brushoffs and eye rolls and rude words he's ever said to him and made fun of the way Ryoken, apparently known as *'the freak's favorite'* for the townsfolk, just 'rolled over and died.'

He waited for what felt like hundreds of years and he never got anything. There were three possibilities, he told himself: Ryoken was dead and he wouldn't come back, Ryoken was alive and decided he wasn't worth the hassle, Ryoken had just disappeared into thin air.

He wasn't sure which one hurt the most, but then a handmaiden told him he was expecting, at least a month or so already, and he just— no.

There's a breaking point for everything, Yusaku *knows* this and he swore to himself ever since he found out about his wretched engagement that he would never reach that point. He would bent, perhaps, but he would not *break*. But he did, into a million tiny pieces, and it was far too easy to trust that feeling of recognition and hope that they would get a better chance together in another life because this one— this wasn't it.

He refused to live chained and bent and shattered.

By the time Ryoken arrives back in town, Yusaku's been gone for a week. He knows gone means *gone* and not gone on vacation because his family home is completely torn apart, Yusaku's mother has been unable to stand up from her bed out of pure grief ever since it happened and the siblings are all quiet and tearful.

He doesn't take it well, of course; the killing rampage he goes on lasts for months on end, he enjoys every second of torturing he puts them through. Yusaku's father comes first, despite his promises to not harm him, because this could have been easily avoided by him, if he had just bothered to listen. The husband and his family comes next, then the people that kept him prisoner, then the rest— the people that escape he doesn't chase, because it wouldn't be worth it, and Ryoken doesn't drink a drop of blood during all of it because he simply can't enjoy the taste when Yusaku's gone, *gone, gone gone*—

It's his fault, which is why he makes the rest of Yusaku's family travel to enjoy that beautiful house he got for them and lays down on the sun for weeks until he smells himself finally burning and decides to take a nap. He never screams, because that wouldn't be proper of him; he swallows down his anger and resentment and bitterness and guilt, kills everyone around him and then takes care of the rest. *He* just happens to be the rest this time around.

"You were always so self-destructive," Ryoken hears his Sire whisper, but he can't bother with him right now, with wondering what he might be doing

here. He just wants it to be *over*. There's a deep sigh, fingers on his hair.  
"This isn't quite right either. Let's start again."

And then he's gone, too. Not for the first time and not for the last.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

look. happy endings are coming. i swear.

**Author's Note:**

Don't kill me, please. I swear they all won't be this sad. But I do hope you liked that, so, thanks for reading!